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Mrs J Evans
The Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Evans

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF KENN CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Peter Kemble, Additional Inspector, to your school on 14 and 15 March 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2005.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, subject leaders, pupils on the school council, parents, governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

The newly appointed headteacher took up post in January 2007. There are now two permanent, full time teachers on the staff, including the teacher previously on secondment. A temporary teacher was recently appointed for the Reception and Year 1 class until the end of the summer term.

Achievement and standards

The evidence from lesson observations indicates that pupils are making better progress in English and mathematics. However, the legacy of inadequate past achievement and weak literacy skills means standards and achievement are still not as high as they should be. The school's analysis of data from recent assessments indicates a significant concern about pupils' performance, particularly in reading and writing in Years 1 and 2. The school is addressing this by providing extra support for pupils where required. There has been much improvement in mathematics in Years 1 and 2. Extra support has been provided for some older pupils who have gaps in their mathematical knowledge and understanding. This is improving their mathematical skills.

The school is increasing the use of information and communication technology (ICT) as staff develop their own confidence in the subject. No science lessons were observed during the visit, but an analysis of pupils' books indicates that standards are broadly average. The presentation of some pupils' work and handwriting remain too untidy, with some careless spelling.

Most pupils made good progress in the majority of lessons because of the good teaching. Occasionally, the more technical language used in lessons was not understood by all pupils, which slowed their progress. Pupils with learning difficulties generally made similar progress to their peers due to effective support by teaching assistants. The school is continuing to develop provision for the gifted and talented pupils.

Provision in the Foundation Stage continues to improve. The children have had several teachers over the past months, which has limited continuity in their learning and confidence. The environment is now much more conducive to developing independent learning skills, although the children lack confidence in this area. The lack of good quality resources for role play limits purposeful play and hampers the children's progress in developing early skills of literacy and numeracy.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils are well behaved, courteous and friendly and these good qualities have been successfully maintained since the last inspection. Pupils play amicably in the playground and move sensibly around the school, particularly when negotiating the steep steps to the playground, steps in and out of classrooms, and the narrow corridors.

Behaviour and attitudes are good and sometimes outstanding. For example, all pupils behaved well and showed considerable enjoyment when taking part in the daily school aerobics. Pupils listened attentively in an assembly and were keen to answer questions. The vast majority took part in lessons with enthusiasm. Pupils enjoyed their learning and were happy to contribute to

whole class discussions. Lessons were characterised by good teamwork and positive relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils were inattentive and lost concentration when tasks were too difficult or too easy, or when the pace of lessons was slower.

Attendance is below the national average. Some pupils have missed important aspects of the curriculum, which has hampered their progress. The school has begun to introduce more rigorous procedures to check attendance.

Pupils are treated in a mature and respectful way. Members of the school council take their responsibilities extremely seriously. Pupils are expected to be responsible for their own conduct. Good behaviour is rewarded and pupils are given a number of responsibilities for the daily running of the school. This leads to a good understanding amongst pupils of right from wrong. Incidents of bullying are rare.

Quality of provision

The good quality of teaching and learning has been maintained since the last visit. The introduction of more interesting activities that hold pupils' attention and higher expectations of what pupils can achieve have improved the quality of learning. Resources, such as interactive whiteboards, are used more effectively. There are still inconsistencies in the quality of teaching with lessons ranging from outstanding to satisfactory.

Good and outstanding lessons reflect the improvements that have been made. For example, Years 5 and 6 pupils showed considerable enjoyment and enthusiasm as they worked together to build an electronic robot. Reception children enjoyed singing and performing a wide range of songs and remembered many of the words and actions.

Where lessons were less successful, although still at least satisfactory, activities were not always sufficiently engaging or motivating. A main reason for this was that information teachers gathered about pupils' achievements was not always used as well as it could be to plan the next steps in learning. As a result, some activities were too easy or too hard and the pupils lost interest. The marking of pupils' work has improved, with some good examples that help the pupils to improve. The teachers' own handwritten comments do not always set a high enough example. The standard of presentation of pupils' work is not always good enough.

When teachers plan their work much of the content is drawn from national guidelines and commercial schemes of work. In this way teachers provide a satisfactory breadth of subjects covered and promotion of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. However, there is much to be done in adapting the national guidelines to meet fully the particular needs of pupils. The staff

are aware that not enough links are made between subjects in order to teach the basic skills in more depth. Progress has been made in improving the curriculum in this way, for instance in the work of Years 1 and 2 pupils on Christopher Columbus. Helpful plans are in place to introduce a revised skills-based curriculum in September 2007. Major work is under way to improve the school grounds as a learning resource.

Standards of care are good. Pupils report that they like school, like their teachers, and feel safe. All staff consistently apply routines and practices to ensure pupils' health and safety. The governors follow up any concerns brought to their attention by parents. They are currently dealing with a security issue that has been identified. Links with parents are good and have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good levels of care.

Procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress are satisfactory. Staff gather a wide range of information about individual pupils' attainment, but its use to set long term targets and to track the progress pupils make over time is inconsistent. In lessons, however, pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve and are given effective opportunities to evaluate their work.

Progress on the areas of improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable – good.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has made a very good start this term. She has quickly engaged with staff, governors, pupils and parents. In a short time she has developed the very positive atmosphere in the school. All staff work together well as an enthusiastic team to maintain improvement. More rigorous procedures have been introduced for assessment and evaluation. The school's own evaluation is clear and accurate with helpful priorities for improvement. Measurable criteria in the school development plan make it easier for the school to assess how well it is doing. A useful outline plan of all monitoring and evaluation activities throughout the year has been agreed.

The headteacher is the special educational needs coordinator and has already had a positive impact in this area through meeting parents, revising plans, and gaining additional support where needed. Subject leaders for mathematics and English have strengthened their roles and gained useful information through monitoring. Through this information they have identified key priorities for improvement. Some subjects do not have leaders because not all staff are employed on a permanent basis. This limits the improvements made in those subjects. In order to support improvement, the staffing situation needs to be resolved as soon as possible.

Governance is good and the governors use their clear understanding of the school to support it in improving and to check how well it is doing. Governors are enthusiastic, dedicated and determined to ensure that the school provides high quality education. They are very well informed through their own visits and through the headteacher's reports. They ensure efficient use is made of resources. Some parents say they would value more information about the governors and their role.

The school ensures that checks are made on adults in the school and also carries out regular health, safety and security checks.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- improve the school's leadership and management and instil a good working climate so that staff can work together effectively to implement change – good
- implement requirements to ensure that full working background checks are made on all adults before they are cleared to work in the school – good.

External support

The local authority has provided extensive and very effective support for the school. Regular visits have had a positive impact on the teaching and learning and have helped to improve the morale in the school. The local authority has been influential in key appointments made in the school and has also been generous with financial support.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Resolve the transient staffing situation as soon as possible.
- Improve pupils' attendance.
- Develop the curriculum so that it stimulates learning and better meets the needs of all pupils.
- Ensure there is a consistent approach to target setting, tracking pupils' progress and the presentation of their work.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Director of Education for Devon, and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Exeter.

Yours sincerely

Anne Johns
Additional Inspector